

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 SAM-01 SAB-01 SP-02 INR-07 NSC-05

CIAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 /042 W

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O R 210115Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6428

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 0441

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PN

SUBJECT: GOP ARRESTS ALLEGED PLOTTERS

REF: PANAMA 0402

SUMMARY: IN WAKE OF (REPORTED) ARRESTS OF AT LEAST 15 PERSONS TODAY INCLUDING AT LEAST TWO KNOWN LEFTISTS, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE CONVOKED EMERGENCY MEETINGS. EMBASSY SOURCE HAS ASSERTED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF PLOTTING--WITH LINKS TO PANAMANIANS AND CUBANS IN MIAMI--BUT WAS UNAWARE THAT ANY DIRECT ACTION WAS PLANNED AGAINST GOP AT THIS TIME. SITUATION IN PANAMA CITY AS OF 7:00 P.M. IS CALM, WITH ONGOING APEDE MEETING THE ONLY KNOWN PRESENT MANIFESTATION OF OPPOSITION TO GOP. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FOLLOWING PERSONS WERE ARRESTED THIS MORNING (JANUARY 20) BY THE NATIONAL GUARD: GUILLERMO FORD, ROBERTO EISENMANN, RUBEN DARIO CARLES JR., ANTONIO DOMINGUEZ, IVAN ROBLES, WINSTON ROBLES, ALBERTO QUIROS GUARDIA, RUBEN AROSEMENA GUARDIA, DIOGENES GUTIERREZ, PORFIRIO SAMUDIO, DARIO SANTAMARIA, REINALDO CARAMANITAS, ENRIQUE CLARK, JAIME AIZPURUA AND GILBERTO ALVAREZ. PETITION OF HABEAS CORPUS HAS ALREADY BEEN PRESENTED ON BEHALF OF THE ABOVE BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT. ACCORDING TO CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT PETITION, A COPY OF WHICH IS IN EMBASSY'S

POSSESSION, ALL WERE ARRESTED IN PANAMA CITY EXCEPT SAMUDIO, SANTAMARIA, ALVAREZ AND AIZPURUA. LATTER WERE ARRESTED IN CHIRQUI AND TRANSPORTED TO PANAMA WHERE THEY JOINED THE OTHERS IN THE MODELO PRISON. NEVERTHELESS, EMBASSY RECEIVED OTHER REPORT THAT QUIROS GUARDIA AND RUBEN DARIO CARLES WERE TAKEN TO TOCUMEN AIRPORT PREPARATORY TO THEIR EXILE. THIS INFORMATION HAS NOT YET BEEN CONFIRMED.

2. GUILLERMO FORD IS A PROMINENT PANAMA BUSINESSMAN AS ARE ROBERTO EISENMANN, RUBEN DARIO CARLES (CHASE MANHATTAN BANK), AND ANTONIO DOMINGUEZ (LATTER ALSO ACTIVE IN FORMER PANAMENISTA PARTY OF ARNULFO ARIAS).

GILBERTO ALVAREZ IS PRESIDENT OF THE CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION. PORFIRIO SAMUDIO AND DARIO SANTAMARIA ARE MEMBERS OF THAT ASSOCIATION. JAIME AIZPURUA IS PRESIDENT OF THE RICE GROWERS ASSOCIATION. IVAN ROBLES IS A LAWYER, WHILE WINSTON IS A LAW PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA. ALBERTO QUIROS GUARDIA IS OWNER-MANAGER OF RADIO IMPACTO IN PANAMA CITY. DIOGENES GUTIERREZ IS A LABOR LEADER IN THE CIT (CENTRAL IsthMERIA DE TRABAJADORES) AND A COMMENTATOR FOR RADIO IMPACTO. RUBEN AROSMENA GUARDIA IS A YONG LAWYER, PAST PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA, AND HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN CONEP. EMBASSY DOES NOT HAVE DATA ON CARAMANITAS OR CLARK YET.

3. AN INTELLIGENCE REPORT INDICATES THAT IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, MIGUEL BERNAL VILLALAZ, UNIVERSITY OF PANAMA PROFESSOR KNOWN FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT IN LEFT-WING STUDENT POLITICS, AND KEY LEADER OF RADICAL LEFT ORGANIZATION FSR (FRACCION SOCIALISTA REVOLUCIONARIO), HAS ALSO BEEN ARRESTED. OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED, BUT NOT YET CONFIRMED, PLACE LUIS PAVON, DIRECTOR OF THE CAJA DE AHORROS, (GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK) ON THE LIST OF ARRESTEES. POSSIBLY ARRESTED ALSO ARE: GUILLERMO FORD'S SON, A NOT RELATED HENRY FORD, ROBERTO MOTTA SR. AN ROBERTO MOTTA JR., CATTLEMEN AND LIQUOR IMPORTERS, CESAR TRIBALDOS, PRESIDENT AND

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MANAGER OF INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER IN PANAMA AND VICE-MINISTER OF THE TREASURY IN 1967, ARISTIDES TYPALDOS, GENERAL MANAGER OF THE STAR & HERALD NEWSPAPER, AND PEPE CHIRINOS (NO INFORMATION).

4. THE PANAMANIAN BANKERS ASSOCIATION AND THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE WERE CALLED INTO EMERGENCY SESSION TODAY CONCERNING THE ARRESTS. THE

PANAMANIAN ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS EXECUTIVES (APEDE)
DISTRIBUTED PAMPHLETS INVITING THE PUBLIC
TO A MEETING AT 5:30 P.M. PART OF THE LEAFLET WARNED
PANAMANIANS THAT THEIR LIBERTY IS AT STAKE AND THE
DEFENSE OF LIBERTY IS NOT ACCOMPLISHED WITH
SLOGANS.

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5. TWO APEDE MEMBERS VISITED EMBASSY THIS AFTERNOON
BRINGING COPIES OF A MANIFESTO (HIGHLIGHTS BEING REPORTED
SEPARATELY) AND OF A WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS WHICH HAS
BEEN FILED WITH THE SUPREME COURT ON BEHALF OF
15 OF THE ARRESTED PERSONS. THEY TOLD EMBASSY
OFFICERS THAT DISCONTENT AMONG BUSINESSMEN AND GENERAL
PUBLIC HAD SPREAD TO THE GENERAL STAFF AND OFFICER
CORPS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND THERE WAS A GENERAL
FEELING THAT "THINGS WERE COMING APART"; THEREFORE
TORRIJOS PROBABLY FELT HE HAD TO ACT DECISIVELY. OUR
VISITORS DISCOUNTED POSSIBILITY THAT THE DISCONTENT
MIGHT HAVE LED TO OVERT ACTION AGAINST TORRIJOS OR THAT
ANY SUCH ACTION MIGHT NOW BE FORTHCOMING. FOR THIS
THE HELP OF THE NATIONAL GUARD WOULD BE
ESSENTIAL AND THEY SAID, IT WOULD TAKE NO SUCH ACTION
WITHOUT THE BLESSING OF THE UNITED STATES.

6. A PROMINENT LOCAL CONSERVATIVE BUSINESSMAN TOLD
EMBASSY OFFICER DURING A BREAKFAST MEETING JANUARY 20
(BEFORE ARRESTS WERE MADE) THAT HE WAS AWARE OF PLOTTING

AND THAT PLOTTERS HAD CONTACTED HIM ON TWO OCCASIONS.
HE MENTIONED THAT NAMES OF SOME OF THOSE WHO WERE
SUBSEQUENTLY ARRESTED TODAY AND TWO OTHERS THAT, TO
OUR KNOWLEDGE, HAVE NOT BEEN ARRESTED. THEIR PLAN WAS
TO BRING BACK ARNULFO ARIAS AS A SHORT TERM FIGURE-
HEAD PRESIDENT. THE SAME PERSON LATER TODAY
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TOLD EMBOFF THAT CUBANS IN MIAMI ALSO WERE INVOLVED
AND FOR THAT REASON HE WONDERED WHETHER CIA MIGHT BE
BACKING THE PLOTTING. HIS UNDERSTANDING, HOWEVER,
HAD BEEN THAT OVERT ACTION AGAINST TORRIJOS WAS TO
BE DEFERRED UNTIL AFTER THE GENERAL HAD CONCLUDED
A NEW TREATY AND BORNE THE BRUNT OF THE INEVITABLE
REACTION TO HIS ACCEPTANCE IN THE TREATY OF THE
CONTINUANCE OF MILITARY BASES. HE OPINED THAT
POSSIBLY TORRIJOS HAD GOT WIND OF THE PLOTTING AND
DECIDED TO TAKE PREEMPTIVE ACTION.

7. AFTERNOON NEWSPAPERS JANUARY 20 HAVE
ANNOUNCED THAT TORRIJOS WILL LEAVE COLOMBIA AND TOUR
SEVERAL OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES IN QUEST OF
MORE SUPPORT FOR PANAMA'S ASPIRATIONS TO OBTAIN
FULL SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE CANAL ZONE, THUS
IMPLICITLY CONVEYING THE IMPRESSION HE IS NOT
OVERLY CONCERNED OVER EVENTS IN PANAMA CITY. THE
PRESS CARRIED NO MENTION OF THE ARRESTS.

8. EXCEPT FOR THE ONGOING MEETING AT APEDE HEADQUARTERS
WITH A CROWD SPILLING OVER ON BALBOA AVENUE AND
PRESENCE ON MAJOR STREETS OF MEMBERS OF THE
OPPOSITION INDEPENDENT LAWYERS'
MOVEMENT WHO ARE PASSING OUT LEAFLETS, PANAMA CITY
APPEARS CALM AS OF 7:00 P.M. BUT IT MAY NOT REMAIN SO.
JORDEN

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